

# Did Christ Abolish the Law of Moses?

---

**“Some teach that Christians are not under obligation to keep the Sabbath day in this age. If that is the case, how is Matthew 5:17-18 to be explained? Did not Christ say that the law would not be destroyed; that it would last as long as heaven and earth?”**

In Matthew’s record of what is commonly called, “The Sermon on the Mount,” these words of Jesus are recorded:

*“Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets; I came not to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished” (Matthew 5:17-18).*

It is frequently argued that if Jesus did not **“destroy”** the law, then it must still be binding. Accordingly, such components as the “sabbath day” requirement must be operative still, along with, perhaps, numerous other elements of the Mosaic regime. This assumption is grounded upon a misunderstanding of the words and intent of this passage.

We may confidently affirm that Christ did not here suggest that the **binding nature** of the Law of Moses would remain perpetually obligatory. Such a view would contradict everything we learn from the balance of the New Testament record.

**Let’s consider the following points.**

**(1)** Of special significance in this study is the word rendered **“destroy.”** It translates the Greek term kataluo, literally meaning to **“loose down.”** The word is found seventeen times in the New Testament. It is used, for example, of the destruction of the Jewish temple by the Romans (**Matthew 26:61; 27:40; Acts 6:14**), and of the dissolving of the human body at death (**2 Corinthians 5:1**). The term can carry the extended meaning of “to overthrow,” i.e., to “render vain, deprive of success.” In classical Greek, it was used in connection with institutions, laws, etc., to convey the idea of “to deprive of force” or to “invalidate.”

**G2647**

καταλύω

kataluō

kat-al-oo'-o

From [G2596](#) and [G3089](#); to [loosen down](#) (*disintegrate*), that is, (by implication) to [demolish](#) (literally or figuratively); specifically (compare [G2646](#)) to [halt](#) for the night: - destroy, dissolve, be guest, lodge, come to nought, overthrow, throw down.

(2) It is especially important to note how the word is used in **Matthew 5:17**. In this context, “destroy” is set in opposition to “fulfill.” Christ came “...not to *destroy*, but [alla — adversative particle] to *fulfill*.”

**G4137**

πληρόω

plēroō

play-ro'-o

From [G4134](#); to [make replete](#), that is, (literally) to [cram](#) (a net), [level](#) up (a hollow), or (figuratively) to [furnish](#) (or *imbue, diffuse, influence*), [satisfy](#), [execute](#) (an office), [finish](#) (a period or task), [verify](#) (or *coincide with a prediction*), etc.: - accomplish, X after, (be) complete, end, expire, fill (up), fulfil, (be, make) full (come), fully preach, perfect, supply.

The meaning is this. Jesus did not come to this earth for the purpose of acting as an adversary of the law. His goal was not to frustrate its fulfillment. Rather, he revered it, loved it, obeyed it, and brought it to fruition. He fulfilled the law’s prophetic utterances regarding himself (**Luke 24:44**). Christ fulfilled the demands of the Mosaic Law, which called for perfect obedience or else imposed a “curse” (see **Gal. 3:10, 13**). In this sense, the law’s *divine design* will ever have an abiding effect. It will always accomplish the purpose for which it was given.

(3) If, however, the Law of Moses bears the same relationship to men today, in terms of its *binding status*, as it did before Christ came, then it was not fulfilled, and Jesus failed at what he came “to do.” On the other hand, if the Lord *did* accomplish what he came *to* accomplish, then the law was fulfilled, and it is not a binding legal regime today.

(4) If the law of Moses was not fulfilled by Christ, and thus remains as an obligatory legal system for today, then it is not a *partially* binding regime; rather, it is totally compelling system.

Jesus plainly said that not one “jot or tittle” (representative of the smallest markings of the Hebrew script) would pass away until all was fulfilled. Consequently, nothing of the law was to fail until it had completely *accomplished its purpose*.

“But,” some surmise, “does not the text affirm that the law would last until ‘heaven and earth’ pass away?” No, only that it would be “easier” for the universe to pass away than for the law of God *not to fulfill its mission* (**Luke 16:17**).

And so, if one contends, on the basis of **Matthew 5:17-18**, that Moses’ law is still binding as a legally required regime, he must take *all* of it including its bloody sacrifices, annual treks to Jerusalem, purification rituals, etc. As Paul later will argue if a man receives one portion of the law [as binding for justification], he is a debtor to do all of it (**Galatians 5:3**). This is the logical consequence of the misguided “sabbatarian” view of this important text.

(5) In addition to the points listed above, Paul clearly argues, in his letter to the Ephesians, that the “law of commandments contained in ordinances” was “abolished” by the death of Jesus upon the cross (**2:14-15**). The Greek term for “abolished” is [katargeo](#), literally suggesting the idea of reducing something to a state of inactivity.

**G2673**  
  
καταργέω  
  
katargeō  
  
kat-arg-eh'-o  
  
From G2596 and G691; to be (render) entirely idle (useless), literally or figuratively: - abolish, cease, cumber, deliver, destroy, do away, become (make) of no (none, without) effect, fail, loose, bring (come) to nought, put away (down), vanish away, make void.  
  
**Total KJV occurrences: 27**

Paul uses this term twice in **Romans 7:2**, showing that just as a wife is “discharged” from the law of her husband when he dies, even so, through the death of the body of Christ, men were “discharged” from the obligations of the Mosaic Law. That the law here contemplated is the law of Moses, including the ten commandments, is demonstrated by the reference to the tenth commandment in **Romans 7:7 (Exodus 20:17)**.

**Rom 7:2** For<sup>G1063</sup> the<sup>G3588</sup> woman<sup>G1135</sup> which hath an husband<sup>G5220</sup> is bound<sup>G1210</sup> by the law<sup>G3551</sup> to her husband<sup>G435</sup> so long as he liveth; <sup>G2198</sup> but<sup>G1161</sup> if<sup>G1437</sup> the<sup>G3588</sup> husband<sup>G435</sup> be dead, <sup>G599</sup> she is loosed<sup>G2673</sup> from<sup>G575</sup> the<sup>G3588</sup> law<sup>G3551</sup> of her husband.<sup>G435</sup>

## G2673

καταργέω

katargeō

kat-arg-eh'-o

From <sup>G2596</sup> and <sup>G691</sup>; to be (render) entirely idle (useless), literally or figuratively: - abolish, cease, cumber, deliver, destroy, do away, become (make) of no (none, without) effect, fail, loose, bring (come) to nought, put away (down), vanish away, make void.

**Total KJV occurrences: 27**

The harmony between **Matthew 5:17-18**, and **Ephesians 2:15**, is this: The purpose of the Law of Moses was never to come to naught; its original design would be perpetual. On the other hand, as a legal code, it would be abolished, being cancelled by the Saviour's sacrificial death (**Colossians 2:14**).

And so, a consideration of all the facts leads only to the conclusion that **Matthew 5:17** does not afford any support to those who maintain that the observance of the Sabbath day is a divinely-required obligation for this age.



Below are the results of the LexiConc search using your criteria.  
(More Info)

There are 9 LexiConc entries that match **fulfil**.

- 2 Hebrew/Aramaic Results
- 7 Greek Results

Strong's #	Hebrew	Transliterated	English Equivalent
Old Testament (Hebrew) for " <b>fulfil</b> "			
H3615	כָּלָה	<i>kalah</i>	consume, end, finish, fail, accomplish, done, spend, ended, determined, away, <b>fulfil</b> , fainteth, destroy, left, waste, misc
H4390	מָלֵא	<i>male'</i>	fill, full, <b>fulfil</b> , consecrate, accomplish, replenish, wholly, set, expired, fully, gather, overflow, satisfy, misc
Strong's #	Greek	Transliterated	English Equivalent
New Testament (Greek) for " <b>fulfil</b> "			
G378	ἀναπληρώω	<i>anaplēroō</i>	<b>fulfil</b> , supply, occupy, fill up
G1603	ἐκπληρώω	<i>ekplēroō</i>	<b>fulfil</b>
G4137	πληρώω	<i>plēroō</i>	<b>fulfil</b> , fill, be full, complete, end, misc
G4160	ποιέω	<i>poieō</i>	do, make, bring forth, commit, cause, work, show, bear, keep, <b>fulfil</b> , deal, perform, not tr, misc
G4931	συντελέω	<i>synteleō</i>	end, <b>fulfil</b> , finish, make
G5048	τελειόω	<i>teleioō</i>	make perfect, perfect, finish, <b>fulfil</b> , be perfect, consecrate
G5055	τελέω	<i>teleō</i>	finish, <b>fulfil</b> , accomplish, pay, perform, expire, misc

### Scripture References

Matthew 5:17-18; Matthew 26:61, 27:40; Acts 6:14; 2 Corinthians 5:1; Matthew 5:17; Luke 24:44; Galatians 3:10, 13; Luke 16:17; Galatians 5:3; Romans 7:2, 6; Romans 7:7; Exodus 20:17; Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:14.

[BACK](#)